

§ 2. PROBLEMS AND CONCLUSIONS

Though the wedding ceremonies just described are not without a few traces ⁵⁸⁵ of a mother-right culture, the wedding as a whole is doubtless typically patriarchal in character.

(1) The wedding procession clearly shows that the marriage is patrilocal, ⁵⁹¹ a fact true of all North Caucasian as well as neighbouring tribes. The bride must move into the house of her father-in-law.

(2) The fact that the bride is humiliated before her mother-in-law (not ⁶⁰⁶ father-in-law), the fact that she is invited into the household by the mother-in-law (not father-in-law), and that it is the mother-in-law (not father-in-law) ⁵⁹² who places the honey into the mouth of the bride, though very suspiciously matriarchal, is reconcilable with a strictly patriarchal society. Even in a strictly patriarchal society the mother of the household enjoys certain privileges and is looked upon as the mistress of the house with special authority over the female members of the household. In other words, in these seemingly matriarchal ceremonies the mother-in-law may perhaps be simply exercising a right of the mother of the household of a typical patriarchal family.¹⁰³

(3) The dramatization of bride capture is a very common custom among ⁵⁸³ the pastoral peoples throughout the world.

Ceremonial bride capture must not be considered as a survival of actual marriage by capture. This is especially true of the Caucasians because a wedding always means a great economic loss for the bride's family—one of their workers must leave them and go over to another sib. Ceremonial bride capture expresses rather the opposition to such a heavy loss. The Dido, as we have seen, actually throw mud and filth at the bride after she has been "stolen". If the ceremony were to represent actual abduction, why should the bride be so "mistreated"? The reason why filth is thrown at her is that she has turned "traitor" to her own family.

(4) The ceremony of hiding, veiling of the face, the bride's taciturnity—⁸³⁴ all these little peculiarities of the Caucasian wedding may be an expression of the bride's natural sense of modesty. Till now she had to avoid, at least in public, the slightest communication with her fiancé. The strict separation of engaged couples, the prohibition even to pass a glance at one's future mate in public, and the death penalty imposed on the girl for pre-marital intercourse—all this is in full accord with the high esteem of pastoral peoples for the physical integrity of virgins. At the wedding, the bride is being publicly introduced ^[83] into a relationship which she has been taught to shun as disgraceful, even punishable by death. Now this once "disgraceful" thing is being done publicly! The bride's resistance, her fleeing, her veiling, her taciturnity, then, are expressions of a reaction against "the great change"¹⁰⁴ from maidenhood to wife, a change more sensibly felt among pastoral peoples than in any other society.

¹⁰³ For the relatively important rôle of a mother of a household in a patriarchal society see E. Pěčina, "Obrjad gostepriimstva v Osetii," SE, (1932), No. 5—6, pp. 140—163, especially p. 156, note.

¹⁰⁴ "The great change," I think, has been coined by Elsie C. Person. See her "Holding back in Crisis Ceremonialism," *American Anthropologist*, n. s. XVIII (1916), pp. 44 f.